

## everybody wants to have a home by MissAtomicBomb (mrs\_nerimon)

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**Summary:**

Can't anyone in this town keep their disgusting love to themselves?

Or, Dustin has a lot of love to give and no one to give it to.

## **everybody wants to have a home**

### **Author's Note:**

I love my angelic son Dustin and I just want him to be happy forever and ever and ever.

Nothing really ever changes in Hawkins, Dustin thinks.

Once the government leaves and the news trucks get bored of the same three shots of the lab, they all pack up and head home, and Hawkins returns to its bizarre, underrated normalcy. New movies at the theater. A history test on Tuesday. Erica prank calling him at midnight. Will's mom buying a new phone. His mom getting a new kitten.

Dustin comes home from school one Monday and a tiny black blur shoots past his feet.

"Tybalt!" His mom shouts. The cat pokes its tiny head out from Mews' house and meows.

"Dusty, honey!" Mom squeezes his cheek as she passes by. "Look at our new family member!"

The kitten is smaller than Mews ever was, all black with white paws. He meows again and his mom scoops him up, hugs him to her chest like a baby.

"Isn't he precious?"

Cats have really never been his thing, but he *was* mostly responsible for what happened to Mews, and he can already see how happy his mom is. Tybalt cuddles under her chin and she giggles.

"He's great, Mom!" Dustin smiles and is gifted with the cat being shoved into his arms in return. He looks up at him questioningly, one paw coming up to swat at his chin.

"He likes you!" Mom brings them both in for a hug, and Dustin feels warm and complete in a way he hasn't for quite some time.

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Mike joins them at the arcade less and less. First it's one day a week, then two, then three, then he's practically living at that cabin.

Dustin gets it, sort of. But it's also frustrating when it's just him and Will, eating snacks at the table alone because Max and Lucas are trying to best each other on Dig Dug.

Will confesses, over a plate of fries and too many cups of soda, that the girl from the dance called his house. He says she's nice and she's cool and she was kinda fun to talk to, but he really doesn't like her like *that*.

Dustin shrugs a shoulder.

"Alright." He says.

"She's pretty though, isn't she?" Will chews on his bottom lip. "Lucas said she was pretty."

Dustin tries to act like he remembers what she looked like because he most definitely was not wiping tears from his eyes on the bleachers until Nancy came and saved him.

"Yeah, totally." That's seems to be the answer Will's looking for.

At least, he thought it was. Will looks even more nervous now, staring down at his hands, voice getting small.

"Why don't I like her?" He whispers, and Dustin feels too serious to be sitting in the corner of the arcade, watching Keith's Cheeto stained hands give tickets to a group of high schoolers.

"I don't know." He says, and Will sighs.

"I don't think.... I don't like...." He frowns like he can't quite get it out, it's stuck deep inside of him.

Dustin grabs onto his forearm.

"Hey," He says. "Astroids just opened up."

Will nods, and as they slide out of the booth the conversation feels more or less left alone. For now.

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They end up having to take the demo-dog out of the freezer.

More accurately, Mrs. Byers screams when she opens the door and the head rolls out, and demands he and Lucas take it outside and get rid of it.

They bury it in the woods on the edge of the Byers' backyard. Dustin finds himself wondering what Dart is doing now, if he survived, if any of them survived.

He knows he really shouldn't, but a tiny part of him hopes Dart made it and is running around the Upside Down, searching for nougat and devouring small animals.

He tries doing research on the demo-dogs. He wonders how similar they are to creatures in this world, if knowing how they work could help them if they ever come back.

*When*, he thinks. *When*. Because he knows this isn't over, this is only another calm before the storm. They're not done yet, even if the gate is closed and El is home. He can still feel a prickling on the back of his neck, a fear that jumps in his gut at every loud noise.

Steve gives him rides him to the library. It takes a few visits before he realizes Steve is strictly here to flirt with the college girl manning the desk, and not to help him look up traits the demo-dogs might share with aquatic animals.

Oh, well.

Steve's still helpful, sometimes, when Dustin can pull him out of his trying-too-hard-to-be-casual lean and actually ask a question about the books.

One afternoon Steve slides into the drivers side and holds up a piece of paper triumphantly. There's 7 digits scrawled on it, and Dustin rolls his eyes.

"Whatever, man. Took you *weeks*."

Steve sends him a wink.

"Long game, my friend. Some girls, they really like that, okay? Keep that in mind." He starts the car. "Slow and stealthy, like-"

"A ninja, yeah, whatever." He smiles back anyway, and Steve reaches over to ruffle his hair, and for a moment Dustin thinks maybe this is what it's like for Will and Mike, to be a little brother.

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The thrill of the arcade begins to wane. They've beaten everything there, twice over for him and Lucas. Keith is being even more obnoxious than usual, so they return to a world they have full control over: DND.

They move the campaign to Will's. Mike is on his weekly scheduled visit out to the house in no man's land, which would make a very good start to a horror movie. As if their lives haven't already become one.

Lucas and Max spend half their time pretending they aren't holding hands under the table, and it sort of bugs Dustin but not in a jealously sort of way. Only in a "you're-both-so-stupid-and-annoying-but-you're-my-friends" sort of way.

Lucas, the most practical person in the world, still kind of falls apart when Max is around. He gets all stammering and sweaty and keeps messing with his hair.

It's funny to watch, but it's also pretty embarrassing, and Dustin would never tell Max all the times Lucas has radioed him late at night, complaining that he thinks he said the wrong thing or he *shouldn't* have held her hand or he *should* have held her hand or a thousand other things.

Dustin's almost glad he doesn't have a girl to make him think like that, because he can't imagine ever experiencing *that* many feelings at once.

Will defeats the boss and Dustin offers to get cookies to celebrate.

And mostly so he can stuff two or three in his pockets for later without anyone watching.

He's passing through the hall when a door opens and Nancy nearly spills into him, catching herself just in time before wiping out the two them.

There's a red bruise blooming just below her left ear, and Dustin's about to ask if she's doing alright before Jonathan follows her out, slamming the bedroom door and looking entirely too pleased with himself.

Gross. Can anyone in this town keep their disgusting love to themselves?

The teenagers both offer him a greeting, but Dustin blows by them and into the kitchen. Nothing soothes the pain of realizing you're the only one alone like some cookies.

Mrs. Byers' chocolate chip cookies will be there for him. They always are.

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Tybalt sleeps on the end of his bed while he radios the others. No one responds for a minute, before a soft voice finally echoes out.

"Dustin?"

It's El. Mike must have taught her how to use the walkie they saved up to buy her. She sounds quiet and far away.

"Hey!" Dustin smiles, even though he knows she won't be able to tell. "How are you?"

A long pause.

"Good." She must have brought the walkie closer to her mouth, because now her voice is kind of staticky. "How are you?"

"Good. Great!" Dustin watches Tybalt stand and stretch, and begin to knead down on his feet. "I'm glad you can use the walkie now."

There's another break, and Dustin can almost see her eyebrows furrowing like when she doesn't understand something.

"Walk-ie?"

"The radio. It's what we're talking on."

El lets out a little sigh.

"No." She says, firmly. "We are not."

Dustin settles further down in bed.

"Yeah, the black box. The one Mike gave you."

"I can't. Use that." Her voice is clearer now. "But I can see you."

Dustin drops the walkie and looks around his room frantically. She's here. Sort of, anyhow.

He starts waving in different directions and he can hear her laugh coming through the walkie talkie, chasing around his room.

"Stop that!" She giggles, and he smiles down at the radio.

"That's so cool." Dustin looks around again, as if could tell where she is. "You're so cool."

She's twenty miles away but she's here, with him, right now.

"Me?" El says, and her voice is almost too shocked, like she's teasing him.

"Yeah, you!" He picks up the walkie again. "Who else can you see?"

"Now, just you." A voice comes through from the background, gruff and older.

"I have to go now." El says. "Goodnight, Dustin."

"Goodnight, El!" And then, because his mom's voice is echoing in his head. "Sweet dreams."

She mulls that over for a moment.

"You too." She says, a little slow, like she's not sure what she's agreeing to.

"And, tell Mike-" She stops suddenly, as if reconsidering. "I... Miss him."

Dustin wants to roll his eyes, but she's so earnest. He'd be a jerk to refuse her.

"Sure." He says. "He misses you too. We all do."

The gruff voice is back, and she whispers something to it before coming back to him.

"Goodnight. Love you. Dustin."

He knows she's only saying it because that's probably what Hopper says before bed, or what she's heard Joyce say to Will and Jonathan, but it still makes him need to wipe at his eyes.

"Love you too, El."

### **Author's Note:**

Steve/Dustin warms my soul? As does Dustin/  
literally everyone t b h.